



## MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

Region Three  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1400 South 19<sup>th</sup> Ave  
Bozeman, MT 59718  
May 18, 2019  
Decision Notice for:

### **Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area Aspen Enhancement Project Draft Environmental Assessment**

#### **Proposed Action**

Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to enhance approximately 40 acres of aspen-dominated forest within the Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area (RLWMA) through contracted mechanical removal of competing conifer trees with commercial value and lop-and-scatter of conifer trees with no commercial value. The objectives are

- maintain remaining portions of an intact aspen-dominated forest;
- restore productivity to decadent portions of the aspen-dominated forest; and
- expand intact aspen-dominated forest.

Aspen-dominated forest was identified as a Tier 1 Community Type of Greatest Conservation Need in the 2015 FWP State Wildlife Action Plan. Conservation need was identified because of relatively limited abundance and the high plant and animal diversity the forest type supports. The greatest conservation threats to aspen-dominated forests were identified as fragmentation and reduction due to human-related development and conifer forest succession. Without wildfire or human-facilitated disturbance, conifer forest succession is expected to functionally eliminate aspen-dominated forest within the proposed treatment area within 40 years. Continued succession to a conifer-dominated forest type would reduce plant diversity and abundance, followed by reduced wildlife diversity and abundance.

The proposed project is adjacent to an ongoing FWP sagebrush grassland enhancement project aimed at maintaining sagebrush grassland through mechanical removal of expanding conifer tree making the proposed aspen enhancement project an extension of ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance diverse habitat types across the RLWMA. The goals of the project also align with aspen-dominated forest management efforts occurring on neighboring lands administered by the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

#### **Montana Environmental Policy Act**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of a proposed action to the human and physical environment. In compliance with MEPA, an Environmental Assessment was completed for the proposed project by FWP and released for public review and comment on April 12, 2019. Public comment was accepted through 5:00 pm on May 13, 2019. The EA was mailed to the standard FWP Region 3 distribution list, posted on the FWP website, and published in the Madisonian and Dillon Tribune newspapers.

### **Summary of Public Comment**

No public comments were received.

### **Summary of Comments supporting the proposed project: None (0) received.**

No public comments in support of the proposed project were received.

### **FWP Response:**

### **Summary of Comments opposing the proposed project: None (0) received.**

No public comments in opposition to the proposed project were received.

### **FWP Response:**

### **Decision**

Based on the EA and having received no public comment, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed action, Alternative B— *Conduct forested habitat treatments on approximately 40 acres of the RLWMA*, as described in the Robb-Ledford Wildlife Management Area Aspen Enhancement Project Draft Environmental Assessment.



Mark Deleray  
Region 3 Supervisor

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